

List Release Training: Session One

Getting Started with Your Best Workplaces for CommutersSM List Release

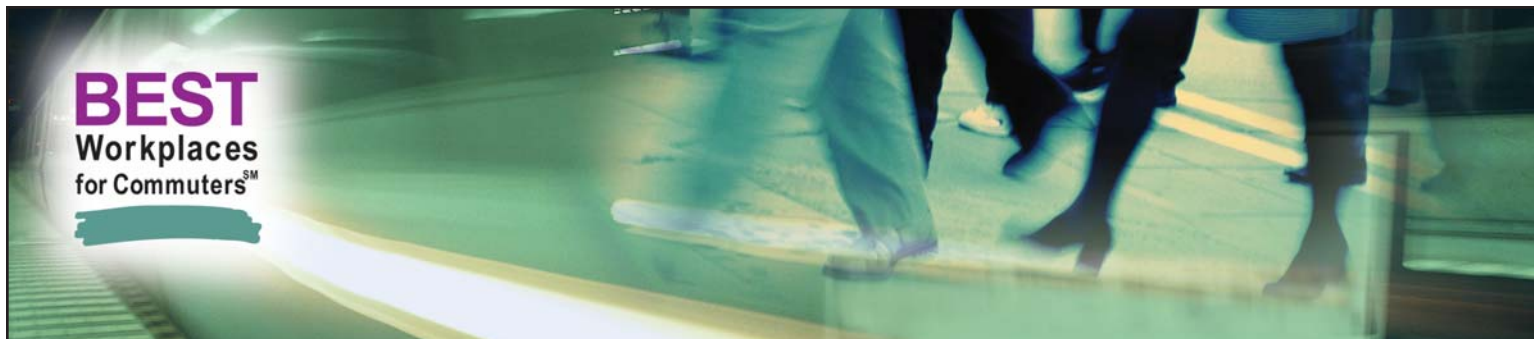
On March 7, 2006, Best Workplaces for CommutersSM began its 2006 list release training series by introducing community coordinators to the online list release guide, touching on all the steps of planning and implementing a community list release, and focusing on the first few steps necessary for getting the outreach effort started. Robin Snyder, an EPA Best Workplaces for Commuters team member, provided opening remarks and introduced the featured participant.

Featured Participants

Robin Snyder, U.S. EPA

Ms. Snyder walked the group through the online list release guide available at <www.bwc.gov/coorkit/kit.htm>. Her presentation is available in PowerPoint format at <www.bwc.gov/presentations/powerpoint.htm>. A summary of Ms. Snyder's key points includes:

- Using the Best Workplaces for Commuters logo is critical to the long-term success of the program in every community. Qualifying employers should display the program logo in places visible to the public, such as on Web pages related to job announcements, benefit packages, and corporate awards.
- The Best Workplaces for Commuters team has a logo use toolkit available to community coordinators and designated employers. The toolkit includes many exceptional, real-world sample materials. Ms. Snyder pointed out that the Phoenix list release coordinator provided each employer appearing on the Phoenix area list with a logo use toolkit.
- EPA will provide first-time list release coordinators with additional assistance on an as-needed basis. Due to budgetary constraints, coordinators in year two and beyond are expected to manage the list release on their own, with the exception of group conference calls and sample materials available at <www.bwc.gov>. However, Ms. Snyder encouraged the participants to contact her if they are unable to find sample materials on the program's Web site. In addition, she emphasized that coordinators may contact her directly if necessary.
- If the number of list release supporters is large enough, it is often more practical to designate a select group as the "official" coalition and the others, such as transportation management associations (TMAs), as "other supporters." This tactic is important because outreach and media materials can only accommodate between five and eight organizations' logos before appearing crowded. The coalition members should be those most credible and influential in the media and to local businesses.
- Generally, the first year's list release generates the most significant media attention. To improve the media coverage in successive years, Ms. Snyder recommends working with coalition members closely connected to local media outlets.
- Ms. Snyder explained that, in general, community coordinators must leave four weeks between the application deadline and the list release to



allow EPA sufficient time for fact-checking. However, local list releases occurring simultaneously with the Best Workplaces for Commuters from the FORTUNE 500 companies list release must extend the timeline to six weeks.

- Community coordinators can employ various methods of public outreach. For instance, the Twin Cities coalition mailed letters in EPA envelopes, which increased the number of recipients who opened the packages. Ms. Snyder added that duplication of messages is generally a positive occurrence, will increase the visibility of Best Workplaces for Commuters, and encourage other employers to begin offering commuter benefits.
- Ms. Snyder did not review the National Standard of Excellence but pointed out that the online application is now automated and allows interested employers to find out immediately if they qualify for the designation.

James Paxson, General Manager, Hacienda Business Park and VP of Northern California ACT Chapter

Mr. Paxson led the 2004 and 2005 Bay Area list release efforts. He co-presented and offered real world examples of activities and techniques included in the list release guide. A summary of Mr. Paxson's key points and examples includes:

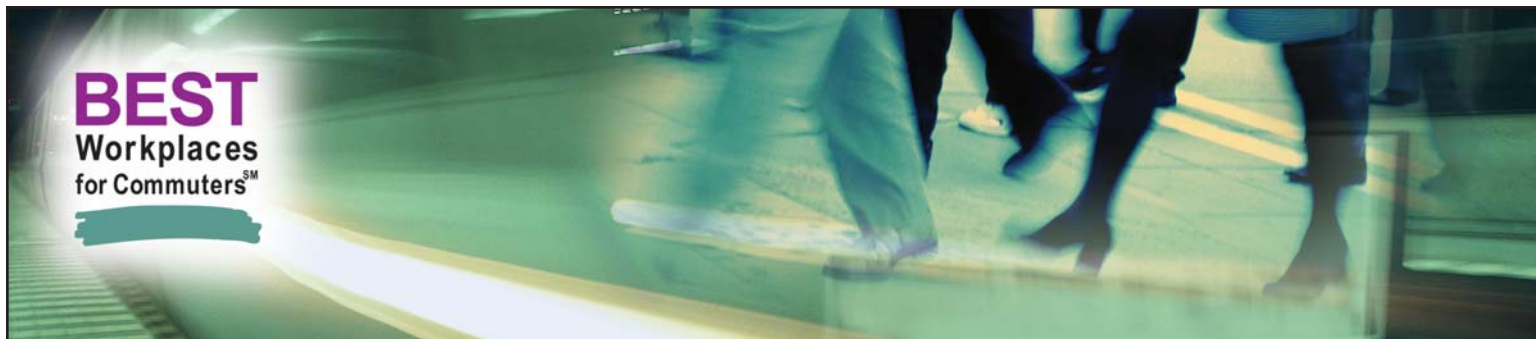
- The Bay Area community coordinators also handed out logo use kits to employers in the region and saw an increase in logo use. Mr. Paxson added that encouraging employers to use the logo helps the recruiting effort and ensures that designated employers stay excited for each year's list release.

- A coalition serves many important functions. First, coalition members can split costs and share the workload. The Bay Area is particularly large and consists of nine counties. As such, the coalition includes business organizations, governmental organizations, metropolitan transportation organizations, human resource groups, and the local rideshare organization. In addition, previous year's coalitions have included well-known, signature employers, such as Yahoo! and Lockheed Martin, that offer challenges to other employers in the region. The signature employers offer name recognition and promote another level of legitimacy to the outreach and media efforts.
- Coalition members can also provide membership lists to facilitate mass mailings and active recruiting (i.e., phone calls) efforts. The most influential organizations are often business leadership groups with direct access to local media outlets.
- Mr. Paxson noted that a Best Workplaces for Commuter list release is a terrific Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) project.
- Mr. Paxson highlighted the value of local leadership signing recruiting letters. He added that public outreach is vital to growing the list each year and working with the local chamber of commerce is a great inroad to local businesses. In addition, the previous year's media coverage can be very compelling.

Open Discussion

A representative from SANDAG asked Mr. Paxson if she could receive a copy of the letter the Bay Area coalition sent to local employers. Mr. Paxson asked the participant to e-mail him directly at <james@hacienda.org>.





A participant from San Diego asked if Best Workplaces for Commuters factoids were available on the program's Web site. Ms. Snyder agreed to locate these factoids and send to the participants. However, some national "facts and figures" are available at: <www.bwc.gov/about/facts.htm>. Ms. Snyder added that in April 2006, Best Workplaces for Commuters will host two sessions to discuss the program's progress report. The report includes important data that demonstrate notable behavior change since 2001 and will likely generate some media attention.

A participant from South Florida explained that the community coalition is issuing a challenge and work-

ing with a local official to make the announcement. Ms. Snyder suggested tying the message to the rising cost of fuel and its impact on household budgets.

Mr. Paxson noted that he is available for questions and is happy to provide other community coordinators with copies of the Bay Area recruiting and press materials.

Closing

Ms. Snyder closed the discussion by thanking Mr. Paxson for his insights and real-world examples. She added that the next call will be held on March 14, 2006, and that summaries will be available at <www.bwc.gov>.